

**Effective July 1, 2022 tribal college libraries that provide public library services will be able to certify that they meet Montana's public library standards.**

**Montana code must be updated to appropriate state aid to tribal college libraries that choose to do so.**

**Current statute:**

**22-1-326. State aid to public libraries.** (1) As used in [22-1-326](#) through [22-1-331](#), "public library" means a library created under Title 7 or under [22-1-301](#) through [22-1-317](#).

(2) As provided in [22-1-325](#) through [22-1-329](#), the commission shall administer state aid to public libraries and public library districts created and operated under part 7 of this chapter. The purposes of state aid are to:

- (a) broaden access to existing information by strengthening public libraries and public library districts;
- (b) augment and extend services provided by public libraries and public library districts; and
- (c) permit new types of library services based on local need.

(3) Money appropriated for the purposes of this section may not be used to supplant general operating funds of recipient public libraries or public library districts. The commission may withhold a distribution to a library or district that receives less support from a mill levy or local government appropriation than its average for the preceding 3 fiscal years if the decrease may reasonably be linked to money received or expected to be received under [22-1-325](#) through [22-1-329](#).





**Montana State Library Testimony  
Before the Joint Education and Interim Budget  
Committees  
March 15, 2022  
by Jennie Stapp, State Librarian**

Chairs McClafferty and Bedey, and members of the Committees, for the record my name is Jennie Stapp (S T A P P) and I am your State Librarian.

I appreciate you making time on your busy agenda to consider the important role that libraries play in Montana's education ecosystem. You will hear in a few minutes how Montana libraries directly support education, including work with public schools and home schoolers.

When I think about successful outcomes from these conversations, and conversations that we will have during the upcoming session, it's that, when you consider the importance of issues like kindergarten readiness, when you reflect on presentations from organizations like the NCEE and NCSL, you ask yourselves how libraries can help Montana achieve our education goals.

Today I want to provide a high-level overview of state funding for Montana's libraries and then I want to visit with you about a legislative change that we are considering for the 2023 session to add tribal college libraries as eligible entities for state aid funding.

In FY 22 the Montana State Library will spend \$965k of state monies to support Montana's 82 public libraries and many school libraries that make use of our statewide programs. This funding is split between the state general fund and the coal severance tax. 45% of this funding goes directly to public libraries in the form of per capita per square mile state aid. \$225,000 funds grants to library federations and the remainder supports professional development and the foundational library technology and services on which Montana libraries rely to provide an online catalog and interlibrary loan.

Though by no means a comprehensive history, I want to provide some historic context for that amount of funding.

In 1979 libraries received 1% of Montana's Coal Severance tax which, at that time was about \$450,000. Today, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, that amount would be \$1.8M. While today Montana appropriates .97% of the Coal Severance Tax for basic library services, in real dollars that amount is still about \$450,000.

In the 1980's and 1990's the Montana State Library made a concerted effort to encourage libraries to share their collections through interlibrary loan. Those libraries that participated received cost reimbursement from the state. While I don't know how much the State Library originally budgeted for this program, I do know that by the early 2000's that amount was less than \$200,000 a year. Due to the decline in funds, the State Library changed the reimbursement program to only reimburse net lenders, or those libraries who lent more materials than they borrowed.



In 2006, after some libraries literally received checks for pennies, a task force of librarians recommended to the State Library that we use the \$196,000 to simply fund statewide contracts for resource sharing services, rather than providing direct reimbursement to libraries.

That year Montanans borrowed 191,000 books through interlibrary loan. In 2021 that number was over 600,000 yet the amount of state funding the State Library has to support resource sharing is still \$196,000

Similarly, in 1989 the Montana Legislature passed legislation to authorize formula-based state aid to public libraries though the legislation was not funded until about \$100,000 was appropriated in 1999. When I became the State Librarian in 2012, the State Library distributed about \$102,000 between Montana's 82 public libraries. After studying the formula to determine if the funds could be leveraged more fairly, Montana libraries told me it made no difference how we split the pot because the pot was just too small.

And so, in 2013 the Montana Library Association and the Montana State Library worked to pass a statutory appropriation to fund per capita per square mile state aid through the state general fund. Following some negotiation during the session, the final amount appropriated was set at \$.40/capita, tied to the decennial census. This amount equaled about \$394,000 split between 82 libraries.

The legislation was initially passed with a four-year sunset and was reauthorized in 2017. The amount of funding appropriated remained \$.40/capita and because the funding is tied to the census, last year, libraries shared an additional \$40,000 thanks to Montana's increasing population. The current amount of state aid is now \$433,000.

The current statutory appropriation sunsets in June 2023 so the Montana Library Association will again seek its reauthorization.

\$965,000 is half the amount of funding libraries received in the 1970's if those dollars had kept pace with inflation. Half the amount of funding from when libraries focused almost solely on lending books, no one had heard of the internet, or the importance of STEAM education.

\$965,000 is pennies when compared to the amount of funding Montana spends in education. Montana libraries are adept at making do with the funds they have, and they stretch every penny but we need to recognize that state funding has not kept pace with inflation and it does not reflect the dramatic changes in library services in the last 40 years. I hope in the coming session we can have a meaningful conversation about funding that reflects the critical role Montana's 21<sup>st</sup> century libraries play in our education ecosystem.

While we are considering state funding, it's also time for us to recognize the role tribal college libraries serve in providing public library services.

As you know, last summer the Montana State Library modernized the Administrative Rules that govern Montana's public library standards. Under the new standards, tribal college libraries that serve as community libraries may now certify that they meet the standards. In discussing this opportunity with these libraries, four have expressed interest in meeting the new public library standards.

Those libraries currently receive no funding through the colleges for these services. Instead, each year they apply for up to \$10,000 in federal grant funds through the Native American Library Services Base Grants program administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

When the legislature considers the reauthorization of state aid, I would like to use that opportunity to ensure that the state aid statute, 22-1-326, expressly identifies libraries formed by tribal colleges and/or councils as eligible libraries to receive state aid.

We continue to discuss this need with stakeholders and I appreciate the opportunity to share this idea with you today.

Thank you for your time and, I am happy to stand for questions.

